



Speedwell Infant School

Unacceptable, Violent and Abusive Behaviour Policy

May 2024

Writer/Amendments	Date	Governor approval date	Review Date
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Introduction

The Governing Body of Speedwell Infant School encourages close links with parents/carers and the community. It believes that children benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

The vast majority of parents/carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. The school recognises that parents/carers may sometimes have worries or concerns about the school or their child/children, and would encourage parents/carers to arrange a suitable time to discuss this with the school and find a positive way forward for their child, in a calm and supportive manner.

However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community. The Governing Body expects members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues for support. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence, abuse or aggression. As such we expect parents/carers and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff.

This policy outlines the steps that will be taken on the very rare occasion where behaviour on school site is unacceptable.

At all times the common purpose remains clear, to provide a calm, caring and safe environment for all children at school, and to ensure staff feel safe in their work and parents/carers and visitors feel safe on school site.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable:

- Shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone
- Physically intimidating a member of staff, another parent/carer or visitor, e.g. standing very close to her/him
- Verbally intimidating a member of staff, another parent/carer or visitor, e.g. by comments made about the person or to the person
- Threatening behaviours, physical or verbal
- Swearing
- Discriminatory comments
- Aggressive and threatening phone calls or emails.
- Aggressive or threatening behaviour towards staff or their families out of school or via social media

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide an overview of the types of behaviours that are not acceptable.

Unacceptable behaviour may result in a ban from accessing the school site and/or the police being informed of the incident.

Procedure to be followed in the event of unacceptable behaviour

If a parent/carer behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or appropriate senior member of staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed. The parent/carer may receive notice of the risk of a ban from the school site if the situation does not improve.

Where all procedures have been exhausted, and unacceptable behaviour continues, or where there is a significant incident of unacceptable behaviour, a parent/carer may be banned from the school site by the Headteacher for a period of time, subject to review by the Governing Body.

In imposing a ban the following steps will be taken:

- The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that she/he is banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow.
- Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local authority and the police will be included.
- The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban
- Where appropriate, arrangements for children being brought to, and collected from the school gate at the beginning and end of the school day for school attendance purposes will be clarified.

The length of a ban

The ban will be for a specified length of time proportionate to the severity of the incident, only the most serious incident would justify an indefinite ban.

The duration needs to be sufficient to convey a clear message about the seriousness of the behaviours displayed, but not so long as to be disproportionate. The aim should always be to restore "normal" relations between parents/carers and the school as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Even if a ban is permanent, it should be reviewed periodically, taking account of subsequently demonstrated patterns of behaviour.

What does a ban achieve?

- It confirms to a parent/carer that the school will not tolerate the unacceptable behaviours
- Shows the school takes health and safety of its staff, visitors and children seriously
- It provides a key element in making it easier to use legal remedies to prevent repeated misconduct, including use of S547 of the 1996 Education Act to enable Police removal and possible prosecution of those on school premises without permission
- It may form the basis for an application for an injunction to curtail repeated instances of unacceptable behaviours.

Parental Rights

Every attempt will be made to maintain normal communications with parents/carers, including telephone and email communication as appropriate to the situation around the welfare, learning and development of their child/children

Even where a parent/carer has been banned from the school premises, they retain their right to an annual consultation in relation to the educational progress of their child/children.

However, the school may determine whether a telephone consultation is most appropriate. Where an in person consultation is agreed, the school will determine who will be present at the meeting (e.g. a senior member of staff might accompany the class teacher) and its location (e.g. it may well be arranged off site).

Options for the Headteacher when an unacceptable incident occurs

After evaluating all available information, and any other relevant factors, there are several actions the Headteacher may wish to take should an unacceptable incident occur. Where appropriate the Headteacher will seek advice from the Derbyshire County Council Legal Team on actions being taken and the wording of any written communication with parents/carers in relation to actions being taken. Actions can include:

Inviting the parent/carer to a meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful where a planned and structured meeting has either not been held before or has previously been productive. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher would be present at any such meeting. A full restorative meeting may be considered, but if it is not safe to bring all the parties together at a meeting, a restorative process can still take place

through the exchange of information. The safety and well-being of those attending such a meeting must be carefully considered. There will always be two members of staff at any such meeting. Consideration should be given to the seating arrangements, and care taken to ensure exits cannot be blocked by a parent/carer who could potentially become aggressive. The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions. Some parents/carers may covertly record meetings and then seek to use the information obtained to support their case. It is therefore the school's policy that information obtained without permission will not be permissible to any proceedings.

Clarifying to the parent/carer what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In some instances it may be appropriate simply to ensure the parent/carer is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained at a meeting, or by letter, however any verbal explanation should be followed by a written confirmation of the discussion and the standards of behaviour outlined.

Forming strategies to manage future situations of potential conflict

It is sometimes possible to identify situations of potential conflict and to plan for these in a way that minimises potential risks. For example, where a parent/carer persistently engages in arguments with staff in corridors at the beginning or end of the school day, the parent/carer could be informed that any discussions with school staff must be held by prior appointment. Alternatively, the parent/carer may be asked not to approach the class teacher, but should instead arrange to meet the Headteacher (or other member of the senior leadership team), who will deal with their concerns. In more serious cases a further option may be to advise the parent/carer that in future their concerns should be dealt with by written communication. Any such arrangements should be confirmed in writing to the parent/carer.

Withdrawing permission for the parent/carer to enter the school site and/or buildings

In more serious cases of actual or threatened aggression/violence, or persistent abuse/intimidation, the Headteacher may need to consider whether it is safe for the parent/carer to continue to come onto the school site or enter the buildings. In such circumstances the Headteacher will consult with the Derbyshire County Council Legal Team around actions and written communication with the parent/carer.

Cases of actual assault should be also reported to the local authority by completing the online accident/injury health and safety event report.

Calling for police assistance

In an emergency situation, police assistance should be sought using 999 if there is an immediate risk to others.

In cases where a ban is in place but is ignored and the person comes onto the school site, the police should be notified immediately. (Staff will need to be aware of the ban and have agreed procedures in place should the person come onto the school site).

In situations where there is no immediate threat to staff, children, other members of the school community or the school's property, the Headteacher may still wish to make their local community police officer aware of the situation. The police could give consideration to warning the offender of formal action, which may include legal proceedings.

Legal proceedings

Where individuals persist in coming onto the school site even when permission to do so has been withdrawn, it is possible for legal proceedings to be pursued. The options include:

Prosecution under section 547 of the Education Act 1996

This requires substantial evidence to be gathered and presented by the police. Clearly it is not a quick process, and whilst in most cases the threat may prove to be a sufficient deterrent, prosecution can only be seen in the last resort as a punitive measure.

Appropriate behaviour contracts

These are voluntary agreements made between people involved in anti-social behaviour, and the agency/school concerned. They are flexible in terms of content and format, and can be an effective means of encouraging young adults, children and parents/carers to take responsibility for unacceptable behaviour. The person named does not always agree with the contract, but it can be used as evidence at a later stage for an application for an anti-social behaviour order. Conditions can be put on the contract, e.g. not to enter school grounds.

Anti-social behaviour orders (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

These are most likely to be used where the offender (aged over 10) has acted in a manner which causes harassment, alarm or distress, and is needed to protect others in the same area from similar behaviour. Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) may be sought by the local authority or the chief officer of police. ASBOs are designed to deal with persistent bad behaviour, and the police will need to show that other options have been tried, or are unsuitable.

Restraining orders (Protection from Harassment Act 1997)

Section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 provides for criminal or civil prosecution, for cases where someone causes alarm or distress to another person on more than two occasions. Section four provides for criminal or civil prosecution where people have been put in fear of violence on at least two occasions. In each case the sanctions include both criminal penalties (fines, imprisonment or community sentences) and a restraining order. These orders are generally quicker and easier to obtain, but are part of a criminal conviction.

Prosecution for criminal damage/assault

Prosecutions for causing deliberate damage or injury may occasionally be the most appropriate course of action. If the police are called, the option to make criminal allegations is readily available, and they may arrest suspected offenders there and then. Official allegations should only be made if there is no intention of later withdrawing the complaint. Criminal proceedings can be initiated at a later date. All possible steps should be taken to prevent the loss of evidence. In particular witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

Individual cases should always be discussed with Derbyshire County Council Legal Team, who will work with the Headteacher to decide the most appropriate response.

Whilst the emphasis will usually be on ensuring safety and security of persons and property, and therefore the injunction route is likely to be the most effective deterrent legal action, it does not necessarily guarantee against the behaviour of the more persistent offender.

Record keeping

There will be clear and detailed records of all events which must be kept up to date, secure and confidential. Any witness statements (where appropriate), notes of any subsequent meetings held to discuss the events and copies of any written communication should also be retained. Notes should be signed and dated.

Any physical evidence should be bagged and labelled, and witnesses should be asked to make a record of exactly what they saw and heard at the earliest opportunity.

It is also advisable to ensure that in every case, even where a formal letter is not required, parents/carers receive a written confirmation of the events and the Headteacher's response. If the police are asked to deal with an incident as a criminal investigation, there are a number of actions that may thwart this process. Witness details should not be made known to suspected offenders or their families. Groups of witnesses or suspects should not be left together, or allowed to discuss what happened, before the police interview them. If in doubt always seek the advice of the police officer first.

Support for employees

The poster in Appendix B will be displayed at all public entrances to the school building. If a member of staff is unfortunate enough to be one of the very small, minority subject to serious physical and/or verbal abuse there are a variety of sources of potential support available to them.

In such circumstances the immediate and ongoing support of colleagues will be invaluable. The school also has an employee assistance programme (EAP) through Education Support where staff members can access advice and support confidentially.

Conclusion

In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Local Authority's education, health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency.

This Policy is based on the NAHT Model Policy and guidance and will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if needed.

Appendix A

Dealing with abusive telephone calls

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening telephone calls. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such abuse. This guidance below has been produced to assist staff if they are faced with such a situation. To reduce the likelihood of callers becoming abusive staff should conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner and make every attempt to meet the needs of the caller. Staff should also have the confidence that it is acceptable to end an abusive telephone call.

Always

- Remain calm and polite
- Stay in control of the situation
- Actively listen – repeat information back to the caller to test understanding of the issue and gain their agreement
- Inform the caller they are trying to help them
- Be positive and say what you can do
- Be clear and avoid using jargon
- If necessary, apologise for an error and take action to put it right
- If you have to go and get some information, let the caller know why you are putting them on hold and do not leave them on hold for a long time. Update them as necessary
- Make notes of the conversation
- Follow the procedure below if appropriate
- Refer to the caller to the Headteacher, deputy etc.

Never

- Respond in the same manner as an abusive caller
- Take it personally
- Allow yourself to be bullied
- Slam the phone down.

Script for abusive telephone calls

When the caller starts to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms...please don't raise your voice/swear at me, I am not raising my voice/being rude to you. If you continue to raise your voice/be rude to me then I will need to end the call.

If the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms..... I understand you are upset/frustrated however I am not prepared to continue to be shouted/sworn at so you can either call back when you have calmed down or if you prefer you can put your views in writing.

If, despite the two warnings above, the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms.... I advised you earlier during this call about raising your voice/swearing and you have continued to do this, so I am afraid I am going to have to end this call.

Hang up.

Further actions:

Make a written note of the telephone call and report this to the Headteacher.

Acceptable Behaviour Towards our Staff

We are committed to treat you with respect and courtesy at all times.

Please treat our staff with the same respect and courtesy as you would expect from us.

Our staff have the right to work in a safe environment and will not tolerate behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

In such instances we will take firm and effective measures to support any member of staff who is subject to unacceptable behaviour including prosecution should that be appropriate.